

## Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

### **PUBLIC NOTICE CLOSURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CASE**

This will serve as notice that the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region (Central Valley Water Board) is soliciting comments from the public regarding the pending closure of an environmental case at 544-925 Highway 299 East, Bieber, CA (Site).

**SUBJECT SITE:**

Big Valley Power, 544-925 Highway 299 East, Bieber, Lassen County

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION COMMENT PERIOD:**

23 October through 23 November 2019

**SUMMARY:**

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) currently regulates an environmental case at the subject property regarding a petroleum release from aboveground storage tanks (ASTs), machinery, and stored chemicals related to a former sawmill and cogeneration operations. The site operated as a sawmill from the 1950s until 2001. A cogeneration plant was added to the facility in 1983, using wood waste from the sawmill as a fuel source. Big Valley Power, LLC (BVP) operated the property from 2004 to 2012.

The Central Valley Water Board regulates the Site under a Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) Order and the Site Cleanup Program. The WDRs are still in place for the Site.

An unauthorized release was discovered during a Limited Subsurface Investigation on 15 March 2007. The investigation found total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) as gasoline, methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), benzene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes above water quality objectives (WQOs) in soil and groundwater samples taken near the truck maintenance shop. On 29 June 2011, Central Valley Water Board staff requested an investigation work plan to define the extent of soil and groundwater contamination. However, a work plan was not submitted and Central Valley Water Board staff issued a California Water Code Section 13267 reporting order on 30 August 2011 requiring BVP to submit the required work plan. On 10 January 2012, Nexbank foreclosed on the Deed of Trust of Big Valley Power, LLC and took over as responsible party.

BVP retained an environmental consultant, AEI Consultants, in July 2013. On 19 August 2013, Central Valley Water Board staff issued a directive letter requesting a work plan for soil and groundwater investigation and removal of hazardous materials and wood ash. During a 21 August 2013 site inspection Central Valley Water Board staff identified storage containers containing hazardous materials, stockpiled wood ash, and six spill areas. The hazardous materials were characterized, consolidated, and transferred offsite in September 2013. Analytical results collected in 2014 indicated that the wood ash stockpile was below hazardous waste criteria thresholds. On 11 April 2017, 16,500 cubic yards of ash was transferred offsite to Dahle Ranch in Lassen County.

In February 2014, BVP collected soil and groundwater samples from the following six spill areas:

- Area 1: - Concrete pad behind the truck shop
- Area 2: - Former AST and secondary containment vault
- Area 3: - Former woodchipper location
- Area 4: - Wood waste fuel loading area
- Area 5: - Emergency generator ASTs
- Area 6: - Kiln shed

All six areas contained elevated diesel, motor oil, and hydraulic oil. Soil and groundwater from Area 3 and Area 4 also contained gasoline constituents.

BVP proposed installing monitoring wells in Areas 1 through 4. Based on minimal contamination and evidence of biodegradation, BVP recommended no further investigation in Areas 5 and 6. On 27 October 2014, Central Valley Water Board staff concurred that additional investigation of Areas 5 and 6 was not necessary but required additional characterization of the extent of contamination in Areas 1 through 4.

BVP installed seven groundwater monitoring wells in these areas during March 2015. Soil and groundwater samples indicated that the source of contamination was primarily in Area 3. In response, Central Valley Water Board staff requested soil source removal at Area 3. AEI removed approximately 484 cubic yards of diesel contaminated soil from Area 3 during October and November 2017.

The close proximity of Areas 1, 2, and 3 to each other allowed the monitoring well network and associated soil and groundwater samples to characterize contamination in all three of these areas of concern. Between March 2015 and March 2018, analytical results from Monitoring Wells BVP-1 through BVP-5 indicated petroleum contamination was highest in BVP-3, the furthest downgradient well.

In order to determine the downgradient extent of the groundwater plume near Areas 1 through 4, two additional monitoring wells, BVP-8 and BVP-9, were installed between 30 July and 1 August 2018. According to AEI, all petroleum constituents in the new

wells were below reporting limits (RLs) and impacted groundwater is limited to the vicinity of BVP-3 and BVP-5. During the Fourth Quarter 2018 sampling event, petroleum constituents showed stable or decreasing trends in BVP-3 and were below RLs or WQOs in all other wells. In addition, a terminal electron acceptor processes (TEAPs) analysis conducted by Central Valley Water Board staff showed that anaerobic biodegradation is occurring in the source zone. Accordingly, Central Valley Water Board staff determined that no further action was required in the vicinity of Areas 1, 2, and 3.

Monitoring results from BVP-6, the downgradient well near Area 4 (wood waste fuel processing unit) indicated that no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are present and relatively low concentrations of diesel remain in groundwater. Additionally, AEI pumped out approximately 3,000 gallons of potentially impacted water from a control room sump in Area 4. Analytical results indicated low levels of cadmium and lead but no VOCs, petroleum, or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Based on these results and corrective actions, AEI recommended no further action in this area.

Based on the available information and recent analytical results, Central Valley Water Board staff recommends that the SCP case at the subject property be closed.

#### **WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

General information regarding the Site can be obtained from the [State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker website](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T10000003101) at:

([https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile\\_report.asp?global\\_id=T10000003101](https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=T10000003101))

All interested agencies, groups and persons wishing to comment on the pending case closure must provide these comments in writing. The comments should be submitted by **23 November 2019** to the Central Valley Water Board's office at 364 Knollcrest Drive, Suite 205, Redding, CA 96002. For information, please call Jason Schroeder at (530) 224-4788 or contact by e-mail at [Jason.Schroeder@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Jason.Schroeder@waterboards.ca.gov).